



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Homeowners Cautioned Against Using Fertilizer To Melt Ice on Sidewalks or Driveways**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health today cautioned homeowners not to use fertilizer to melt ice on their sidewalks and driveways, according to James Collins Jr., environmental scientist with the North Dakota Department of Health.

“Fertilizer containing nitrates should not be used as an ice-melting product,” Collins said. “By using fertilizer to melt ice on sidewalks and driveways, homeowners may inadvertently be polluting the water they use for drinking, recreation and fishing.”

Although fertilizer may melt ice, it can cause serious problems when the melt water containing the fertilizer reaches a water source, according to Collins. Fertilizer nitrates that reach a drinking water source can pose a health risk to young children. Nitrates also can cause excessive growth in aquatic plants, making bodies of water unsuitable for recreation. When the aquatic plants die and decay, oxygen is used, depleting the oxygen levels needed for fish and other aquatic life.

According to the Department of Health, safer methods of melting ice are available. Sand can be swept onto the lawn or picked up for reuse after the winter season. Using a mixture of sand and salt will save consumers money by stretching commercial ice-melting products. An ice chisel also can be used to remove ice or to roughen the surface to prevent slipping.

A sand/salt mixture is the preferred option for ice removal on city streets. In the spring, the excess sand is swept up and reused the following year. Not only is this practice economical, it also helps protect the state’s valuable water resources.

For more information, contact Jim Collins Jr., North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5161 or [jcollins@state.nd.us](mailto:jcollins@state.nd.us).

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